WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An expression vector, said vector comprising an expression cassette comprising from 5' to 3' the following elements: a CMV promoter sequence, a CMV enhancer sequence, a CMV intron A sequence from the CMV major immediate early gene, a heterologous nucleic acid sequence, and a polyadenylation site, wherein the promoter is operably linked to the heterologous nucleic acid sequence.

2. The expression vector of claim 1, wherein the CMV intron A sequence has a deletion from about base 1513 to about base 1736.

3. The expression vector of claim 1, wherein the heterologous nucleic acid encodes a cancer antigen.

4. The expression vector of claim 1, wherein the expression cassette comprises nucleotides 54-3675 of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

5. An expression vector of claim 1, wherein the expression cassette comprises nucleotides 1-1653 of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

6. The expression vector of claim 1, wherein the expression cassette comprises the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

7. The expression vector of claim 3, wherein the cancer antigen is encoded by the nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

8. A host cell comprising the expression vector of claim 1.

9. A host cell comprising the expression vector of claim 4.

10. A host cell comprising the expression vector of claim 5.

11. A host cell comprising the expression vector of claim 6.

12. The host cell of claim 8, wherein the host cell is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* and mammalian cells.

13. The host cell of claim 9, wherein the host cell is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* and mammalian cells.

14. The host cell of claim 11, wherein the host cell is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* and mammalian cells.

15. A composition comprising an expression vector as set forth in claim 1.

16. A method for expressing a heterologous nucleic acid sequence, the method comprising culturing a host cell comprising an expression vector, said vector comprising an expression cassette comprising from 5' to 3' the following elements: a CMV promoter sequence, a CMV enhancer sequence, a CMV intron A sequence from the CMV major immediate early gene, a heterologous nucleic acid sequence, and a polyadenylation site, wherein the promoter is operably linked to the heterologous nucleic acid sequence.

17 . The method of claim 16, wherein the CMV intron A sequence has a deletion from about base 1513 to about base 1736.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the heterologous nucleic acid encodes a cancer antigen.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the expression cassette comprises nucleotides 54-3675 of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein the expression cassette comprises nucleotides 1-1653 of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein the expression cassette comprises the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

22. The method of claim 16, wherein the host cell is selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* and mammalian cells.

23. The method of claim 18, wherein the cancer antigen is encoded by the nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

24. A method for eliciting an immune response, the method comprising the steps of administering an immunogenically effective amount of the immunogenic composition of claim 12 to a subject, wherein the immune response is directed against a polypeptide encoded by the heterologous nucleic acid sequence.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the immunogenic composition is administered multiple times.